Revision of Royalty Rate on Crude Oil

*227. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have revised the rates of royalty on crude oil with effect from 1st April, 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government has revised adhoc royalty payment rate from Rs. 528/- per metric tonne to Rs. 578/- per metric tonne with effect from 1.4.96. These adhoc rates are subject to adjustment on notification of final rate of royalty which will be notified on receipt of audited figures of weighted average cost of production of crude oil from Comptroller & Auditor General of India.

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Sir, I would like to know whether the Government of Gujarat has represented to fix a regular rate for the block years 1993—96, secondly, whether the Government of India has revised the rate of royalty with effect from 1.4.1996. If yes, what are the details? If not, why not?

SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY: There were so many representations from different States—Gujarat, Assam, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and other related States. Normally the royalty, as per the Act, is to be revised every three years only. And also, Sir, the payment of royalty as per the entitlement of the State Governments is given only "on account", because it is to be finalised by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and he has to communicate to us. We will notify the final payment only after his communication to us. In the meantime, if delay occurs after the Comptroller and Auditor General has given his audited figures to the Ministry, there is a penaly clause in the Act, That is, we have to pay ten per cent as penalty every month on the balance due to the States. Sir, on 1.3.1996 the Government of Gujarat has asked for revision of the rates, but we have taken it as on 1.4.1996 because the annual accounts arc closed only in April.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Additional Passport Offices in Madhya Pradesh

*223. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up additional Passport offices in Madhya Pradesh in near future;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of applications for issuance of passports in Madhya Pradesh pending with the concerned authorities; and

(d) the steps taken to expedite those applications?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY Or EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASTJNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (d) The opening of new passport offices is governed by certain criteria such as the location of existing passport offices, volume of applications from a particular region and the recommendations of the Standing Committee of Parliament for External Affairs that there must be at least 50,000 applications per annum from an area for a new passport office to be opened. The total number of applications for issue of passports received by the Passport Office at Bhopal from the whole of Madhya Pradesh State in 1997 was 26,318. The number for the period from January to May 1998 was 12,504. There is thus no justification to open an additional Passport Office in Madhya Pradesh.